

Jicarilla Apache Nation Veteran Group

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My name is Lyle Atole and I am the current Commander of the Jicarilla Apache Nation Veterans Group. Today I want to talk to you about some of the projects and concerns that the veterans of the Jicarilla Apache Nation and surrounding communities of Dulce are involved in.

The Jicarilla Apache Veterans Group is a non-profit veteran service organization devoted to caring for and empowering all Jicarilla Apache Veterans and their families through the following programs: Veterans in need, support and gratitude, Case management and advocacy to include community outreach and education and Esprit de Corps.

The Vision of the Jicarilla Apache Nation Veterans Group is to improve, preserve and defend the quality of life of all Jicarilla Apache Veterans and their families living in and around the town of Dulce, New Mexico.

History

Over the years that the group has been assembled it has gone thru many different leadership changes. Thru the course of change of leadership, the group's name has been changed as well. When the Group was first assembled it was known as the "Jicarilla Vietnam Veterans Association". In 2006 the group was reorganized and by resolution the Jicarilla Nation recognized the group as "AMVETS Post 1937". In September 2009, the state of New Mexico suspended AMVETS Post 1937 due to lack of revalidation documents not being submitted. The group was then reorganized and was re recognized by the Jicarilla Nation as the now "Jicarilla Apache Nation Veterans Group" with its own by laws and officers.

Projects:

1. Healthcare is an important topic we are strongly trying to deal with living in a rural area community. In recent years the local Indian health Service (I.H.S.) has been doing outreach to help gain information on the need of local veterans. This is a challenge as to some of the veterans will not communicate on any problems they are having whether it be physically or mentally. We are proud people and have been taught to be strong. The lack of resources such as counseling for PTSD or substance abuse is a major issue in our community. There are veterans who prefer to seek counseling or medical attention off of the reservation and this causes a problem because the major hospitals or educational services are usually more than an hour's drive away from the community of Dulce. As part of these issues the group has decided to start looking for resources to help, such as transportation and counseling aids to be brought into our community.

2. The Jicarilla Apache Nations has designated the third Friday of July, "Jicarilla Warriors Day".

It is a day that the Nation recognizes its veterans and gives thanks to all those who have honorably served the United States of America. A Free Luncheon is provided to all veterans and their families. The attendance of this event is growing every year and we use this time to give our five oldest living veterans a token of appreciation with a Pendleton blanket with our group's logo and a plaque saying "thank you for your service to our great country". The group also uses this day to invite Veteran Benefit Coordinators from throughout the state of New Mexico and our local neighbors of Arizona and Colorado to come and set up a booth and pass out information and communicate with our local veterans on any issues or concerns they have. The outreach of this event is a great success and several veterans are finally getting some of their concerns addressed.

3. In recent years there have been questions concerning substandard housing being provided for veterans and their families. There have been questions if veterans could use VA loans to help buy a mobile home to be transported onto the reservation or could be used to build one onsite of a designated landsite. Research had to be done and it was concluded that the Jicarilla Apache Nation does have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the V.A. We are currently in the process of finding more information with business's that would be able to work with this type of loan. The group is also researching companies that could help with veterans to get a loan they could use to renovate an existing home.
4. Our last project we are currently working on is to find funding to help us get a Veterans center built in the community of Dulce. A multi-use building we can host our monthly meetings, Counseling sessions, display memorabilia we have of our time in the military, and a place we can host future events, as well as the community to use.